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PHOTO: PTI

Trump to double tariffs on foreign steel to 50 pc

WEST MIFFLIN, 31 MAY

US President Donald Trump on Friday told Pennsylvania steelworkers he's doubling the tariff on steel imports to 50 per cent to protect their industry, a dramatic increase that could further push up prices for a metal used to make housing, autos and other goods. In a post later on his Truth Social platform, he added that aluminium tariffs would also be doubled to 50 per cent, and both tariff hikes would go into effect Wednesday. Notably, steel prices have climbed 16 per cent since Trump became President in mid-January, according to the government's Producer Price Index. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: PTI

Colombia retracts Pak remark after Tharoor's objection

BOGOTA, 31 MAY

Colombia has retracted a statement offering condolences to Pakistan following the loss of lives due to India's military strikes in response to the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, confirmed Shashi Tharoor, a Congress MP leading an all-party delegation. In discussions with Vice Foreign Minister Rosa Yolanda Villavicencio, Tharoor articulated India's "zero tolerance for terrorism" and expressed disappointment over Colombia's initial stance. The Vice Minister assured Tharoor that Colombia's position was now properly understood and supported. Earlier, Tharoor had flayed the country, saying he was disappointed with their condolences and that there could be no equivalence between acting in self-defence and terrorism.*—PTI*

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PHOTO: X

Tiger conservation pioneer Valmik Thapar dies at 73

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Eminent wildlife conservationist Valmik Thapar died at his residence on Saturday morning. He was 73. He dedicated his life to the study and conservation of wild tigers. He lobbied for tougher anti-poaching rules and was part of over 150 government panels and task forces. Thapar was appointed a member of the Tiger Task Force that reviewed the management of tiger reserves. He said that certain areas should be kept free from human interference for tigers to survive. He authored or edited over 30 books on wildlife, including 'Land of the Tiger: A Natural History of the Indian Subcontinent' and 'Tiger Fire: 500 Years of the Tiger in India'. He is survived by his wife and a son. *—PTI*

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Social distancing is back!

Masks must in crowded places | Sick students to stay home

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

In the wake of recent increase in Covid-19 cases in the State, the Karnataka government on Saturday issued a public advisory, asking people to practice responsible behaviour by wearing masks in crowded places, maintaining physical distancing, and practicing good hygiene.

The public advisory on Covid-19 surveillance and safety was issued by the Commissioner, Health and Family Welfare Services.

"In light of the recent increase in Covid-19 cases in Karnataka, the State continues to monitor and manage Covid-19 through on-going efforts to prevent transmission, detect cases, and provide care. The Department of Health and Family Welfare requests all citizens not to panic, but stay vigilant and actively support public health efforts," the advisory said.

The public are advised to: "Stay alert, not anxious. Stay informed through official sources, avoid unverified information. Share Information with Health Staff: Inform authorities about travellers from abroad for needful follow-up.

"Practice responsible behaviour: Wear masks in crowded places, maintain physical distancing, practice good hygiene," it further said

Report symptoms early, and seek medical advice immediately if experiencing fever, cough, chest pain or breathing difficulty, it added.

Report unusual increases in Covid-19 like symptoms via the community monitoring tool of Integrated Health Information Platform portal.

63yr old dies in City

A 63-year-old man with co-morbidities and who tested positive for Covid-19 died at a private hospital, taking the virus-related death toll in the State to four, officials said.

He was admitted to a private hospital in Bengaluru Urban on 21 May after he complained of weakness and died on 29 May, they said. According to the health department statement, the patient, who was fully vaccinated, was on post operative chemotherapy and had co-morbidities like pulmonary TB with squamous cell carcinoma of buccal mucosa.

He died due to saggital sinus, internal jugular vein thrombosis with incidental Covid positive status, it added. *—PTI*

Children with symptoms should not go to school

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The State government's circular asked parents not to send their children to school, if they have fever, cough, cold and other symptoms.

"If fever, cough, cold and other symptoms are found in school children, do not send the children to school and follow appropriate treatment and care measures as per doctor's advice," the circular said.

It asked parents to send children to school only after they completely recovered.

If children come to school with fever, cough, cold and other symptoms, inform their parents and send them back to home, the Health Department instructed teachers.

Similarly, if symptoms are found among the school teachers and non-teaching staff, they too should follow appropriate measures.

—PTI

RAINS WRECKS HAVOC IN MANY STATES

MANGALURU/GUWAHATI /ITANAGAR/SHILLONG, 31 MAY

Heavy rainfalls continued to pound the country, triggering landslides in several Northeastern states and evacuation in the south, including in Karnataka. Several died in rain related incidents.

Rainfall in Dakshina Kannada in Karnataka led to an increase in the water level of the Nethravathi River, prompting precautionary evacuations of people from low-lying areas.

Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao confirmed that seven people had lost their lives due to landslides, house collapses, and accidents in rough seas amid continuous heavy rainfall.

The Northeast witnessed similar horror, with at least 19 confirmed dead at the time of reporting across several states.

Landslides, flash floods and building collapses triggered by the rain brought ruin as people were stranded and evacuated from the affected areas.

People wade through a flooded Guwaahati on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

In Mizoram, two girls died after being struck by lighting, officials said. With this, six people have been killed in the state in rain-related incidents in the last three days, they said.

In Assam five died in landslides, all from the Kamrup Metropolitan district.

Similarly nine were killed in flash floods and landslides in Arunachal Pradesh, officials said.

Seven members of two families lost their lives after their vehicle was swept off the road by a landslide late Friday. *—PTI*

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FIRST CONFIRMATION

India admits to losing aircraft in Op Sindoor

SINGAPORE/NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan on Saturday acknowledged losses of aircraft in India's recent military hostilities with Pakistan but dismissed as "absolutely incorrect" Islamabad's claim of downing six Indian fighter jets.

These comments are the Indian military's first clear acknowledgement of losses in the four-day clashes.

Gen Chauhan, in an interview to Bloomberg TV, declined to specify how many aircrafts were lost and instead highlighted that the Indian military carried out high-precision strikes deep inside Pakistani territory.

"I think what is important is not the jet being downed but why they were being downed," Gen Chauhan, currently on a visit to Singapore, said. He was asked whether India lost combat jets during the four-day military clashes with Pakistan earlier this month.

"So the good part is that we were able to understand the tactical mistakes which we made, remedy it, rectify it and then implement it again after two days and flew all our jets again targeting at long range," he said.

"Absolutely incorrect," he said when asked about Pakistan's claim of shooting down six Indian jets during Operation Sindoor.

Indian Air Force's Director General of Air Operations, Air Marshal AK Bharti, had on 11 May said that "losses are a part of combat" and said all IAF pilots returned "home safely".

Hours after Gen Chauhan's comments, Congress asked the government in New Delhi to truthfully tell the country what losses were suffered.

"Will the Modi government now take a similar step in light of what the Chief of Defence Staff has just revealed in Singapore?" Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X. *—PTI*

General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff, Indian Armed Forces, center, during the 22nd Shangri-La Dialogue summit in Singapore, Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

OPERATION SHIELD TAKES PLACE IN BORDER STATES

New Delhi, 31 May

Civil defence drills or mock drills are being conducted again across several states in India, including Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh, and Jammu and Kashmir under 'Operation Shield'. The comprehensive drill is being organised under the guidance of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, to simulate critical incidents such as air raids, drone attacks, and other wartime scenarios in the light of current national security concerns, an official statement said on Friday. According to the guidelines released by Jagjeet Singh Monga, Director of the Directorate of Civil Defence, a coordinated mock drill and blackout will be carried out simultaneously in all several districts of the states.

Tumakuru farmers protest against Hemavathi Express Link Canal

TUMAKURU, 31 MAY

Farmer organisations, Opposition BJP and JD(S) on Saturday held a massive protest against the Hemavathi Express Link Canal Project near Gubbi in Tumukaru, officials said. The government had approved about Rs 1,000 crore for the project.

The protesters reportedly reached the project site. Later, they withdrew after administration assured to halt the project. However, some of the protesters were detained by the police, they said.

Raising anti-government slogans, the protesters sat on the roads, disrupting traffic. They also resorted to burning tyres and termed the government's plan to divert the Hemavathi canal water to neighboring Bengaluru South district (Ramanagara) despite public opposition as "unscientific".

MLAs B Suresh Gowda, GB Jyothi Ganesh and MT Krishnappa participated in the protest. There was heavy police deployment at the spot.

Farmers protest against the Hemavathi Express Link Canal, through which water would be sent to Magadi and Ramanagara, on Saturday ***PHOTO: ANI***

The protesters claimed that this project will be detrimental to several taluks of Tumakuru district.

A group of seers from different religious mutts participated in the protest.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah speaking to reporters in Bengaluru said he has spoken to district-in-charge minister G Parameshwara, who also holds the home portfolio and asked him to resolve the issue. *—PTI*

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HOOKAH BARS BANNED

Karnataka raises the age for buying tobacco to 21

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The Karnataka government has notified a legislation that prohibits hookah bars, raises the legal age for buying tobacco products from 18 to 21 years, and increases the fine for violations.

The notification was issued on 30 May, following the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2024, receiving the President's assent on 23 May.

The Act that prohibits the use of tobacco products in public places and says no person shall use tobacco products (smoking or spitting) in public areas.

However, a separate provision for smoking area or space can be made for hotels with thirty rooms or a restaurant having seating capacity of thirty persons or more and in airports, it added.

The Act further prohibits hookah bars. "Hookah" bar means an establishment or place where people gather to smoke tobacco or other similar products from a communal hookah or narghile, the Act said.

The punishment for running a hookah bar is punishable with imprisonment for a term between one and three years and a fine of between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh.

The act prohibits the sale of tobacco products to people under 21 years. "It cannot be sold in an area within a radius of one hundred meters of any educational institution; and it cannot be sold in loose or in single sticks," it said.

The fines for smoking in public and for the sale of tobacco to people under 21 were increased from Rs 200 to Rs 1,000. *—PTI*

- The fines for smoking in public and for the sale of tobacco to people under 21 were increased from Rs 200 to Rs 1,000. The Act also prohibits hookah bars

PHOTO: PTI

AI launches daily flights from B'luru to Kathmandu

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Air India Express is set to launch daily direct flights between Bengaluru and Kathmandu, starting 1 June. Aloke Singh, Managing Director of Air India Express, stated that this new route further enhances the airline's expansion into short-haul international leisure destinations, alongside existing services to Bangkok and Phuket. Bookings are now available on the airline's website and through major booking channels, with inaugural fares beginning at Rs 8,000 for Xpress Lite and Rs 8,500 for Xpress Value. Daily flights will depart from Bengaluru at 5.05am and return from Kathmandu at 9.05am. Additionally, the new service offers convenient one-stop connections to Kathmandu for travellers from 20 cities across India and two international locations: Abu Dhabi and Dammam. Air India Express currently operates over 450 weekly flights connecting 31 direct destinations from Bengaluru. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Power station operators face criminal charges

MYSURU, 31 MAY

In a significant development, HD Kote MLA Anil Chikkamadu has directed officials to file a criminal case against Kabini Subhash Power Station over allegations of illegally acquiring government land in the Kabini reservoir. This decision arose during a Karnataka Development Programmes review meeting, prompted by widespread public concerns regarding land misuse. Accusations have surfaced that the Kolkata-based Subhash Power Station Corporation Limited illegally secured 13 acres of state irrigation land, subsequently acquiring necessary records and fraudulently borrowing over Rs 185 crore from banks. Retired police assistant inspector Doreswamy claims that the previous tahasildar and revenue officials facilitated this land transfer. Meanwhile, the executive engineer of the Kabini reservoir, Chandarashekhar, has committed to investigating the matter further. In contrast, Subhash Power Station's senior manager V Senthilkumar refuted the allegations, insisting they have not engaged in any wrongdoing or mortgage of government property. *—Salar News*

Nodal officers appointed for State public schools

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The State government has appointed nodal officers to coordinate and expedite construction of CSR-funded Karnataka Public Schools. Commissioner for Industrial Development Gunjan Krishna has been appointed as the coordinating officer and Karnataka State Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation MD Khushboo G Chowdhary has been appointed as the CEO. The two officers will work with various corporates to mobilise CSR funds for the Karnataka Public Schools. The Karnataka Public Schools is a dream project of the DCM to upgrade educational infrastructure in rural schools and provide high quality education to students from rural areas. All the schools would be built with CSR funds from corporates. The decision to appoint nodal officers was taken in view of the slow progress in setting up 2,000 Karnataka Public Schools in the State. The two officers will work to expedite the execution of this project. *—Salar News*

Prohibitory orders near Hemavathi Express Canal

Farmers call it 'unscientific' to divert water to B'luru South

TUMAKURU, 31 MAY

Protesters took to the streets to oppose the Hemavathi Express Link Canal Project near Gubbi in Tumukaru. Farmer organisations, Opposition BJP and JD(S) leaders alike boycotted the Rs 1,000 crore project.

Prohibitory orders were imposed in a 10km radius where work is underway till 6 am today.

MLAs B Suresh Gowda, GB Jyothi Ganesh and MT Krishnappa participated in the protest.

Speaking to reporters here, Gowda said that the Deputy Commissioner spoke to them and agreed to stop the work and shift the working machines.

"We have given a month's time. Today our farmers have shown a sample. Today, just on a call given, farmers gathered from across Tumakuru and expressed their anger through a padayatra (march) by violating the prohibitory orders," he said.

Farmers approached the canal work but were requested by the Superintendent of Police not to take law into their hands. "Respecting the law, we adopted a peaceful approach. If the government again decides to go ahead, they will face strong protest, he warned," he said. The BJP MLA urged the government to convene an all-party meeting immediately and stop the work. District-in-charge minister G Parameshwara said the protest were nothing but politics.

Farmers approached the canal work but were requested by the Superintendent of Police not to take law into their hands *PHOTO: SALAR*

- District-in-charge minister G Parameshwara said the protest were engaging in nothing but politics. "When we attempted to begin the work three months ago, BJP opposed it calling it unscientific, subsequently a meeting was held under the leadership of Irrigation Minister and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar where BJP and JD(S) MLAs were present. It was decided in the meeting to form a technical committee… upon which a decision was taken…. But they are again protesting."

"When we attempted to begin the work three months ago, BJP opposed it calling it unscientific, subsequently a meeting was held under the leadership of Irrigation Minister and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar where BJP and JD(S) MLAs were present. It was decided in the meeting to form a technical committee and seek their opinion on feasibility before taking a decision," he told reporters in City.

It was based on the technical committee report that the work started, Parameshwara said, "They are again protesting to stop the work, we will talk to them and continue."

Despite assurances from the Deputy CM that it will in no way affect Tumakuru, if they protest one should understand what their intention is, Parameshwara added.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Shivakumar said, all the MLAs including Krishnappa and Suresh Gowda are aware of facts but still they are protesting.

"People there also are our own, we will protect the interest of everyone," he said.

—PTI

AMID RAINS

People evacuated as Nethravathi River rises

MANGALURU, 31 MAY

- Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the families of those who were killed in rain-related incidents

Continuous rainfall in Dakshina Kannada district has led to an increase in the water level of the Nethravathi River, prompting precautionary evacuations of people from low-lying areas of Bantwal taluk, officials said on Saturday.

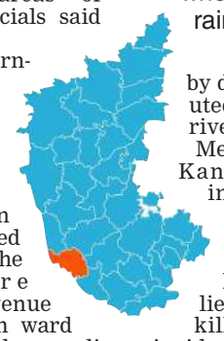
On Saturday morning, the river was flowing at 7.6metre, close to the danger mark of 8.5metre.

Authorities reported water entering houses in Aladkapadpu, located in the 24th ward of the Panemangalore Municipality. Revenue officials, along with ward member Siddiq Guddeyangadi and local volunteers, assisted in relocating affected families to safer areas.

Officials said the situation is being closely monitored, and more areas may be impacted if rainfall persists and water levels continue to rise.

Guddeyangadi said that more areas might come under the floodline and volunteers are monitoring the rise on an hourly basis.

Water discharge from near-by dams has also contributed to the increased river flow.



Meanwhile, Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of those who were killed in rain-related incidents in the coastal region over the past week.

Addressing a press conference after visiting rain affected areas, Rao noted that seven lost their lives due to landslides, house collapses, and accidents in rough seas.

The coastal district witnessed widespread disruption in the past week, with overflowing rivers, inundated homes, fallen trees, and damage to infrastructure. *—PTI*

JOYRIDE

A man drives an autoriskshaw full of decorative flowers to a wholesale shop in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Officials to pay for low pass % in schools

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has ordered Deputy Directors of Public Instruction (DDPIs) in districts with Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) pass percentages below 60 to be served notices. During a meeting with Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), he emphasised that if the responses to the notices are unsatisfactory, appropriate action must be taken.

"DDPIs must take responsibility. They, along with secretaries in charge of districts, must visit schools and review the performance of teachers. If teachers and DDPIs work with interest, good results will come everywhere," Siddaramaiah stated. He further questioned the slow pace of schoolroom construction under the Viveka scheme, insisting that immediate action plans be implemented.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DCM DK Shivakumar, Home Minister G Parameshwara, Chief Secretary Shalini Rajanish and other cabinet ministers during a second day meeting with DCs and CEOs at Vidhana Soudha in

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar expressed dissatisfaction regarding the slow progress in constructing Karnataka Public Schools. "CSR funds to the tune of Rs 8,000 crore is available in the state... Some corporations are misallocating CSR funds to private NGOs in other states, resulting in losses for the state," he remarked.

Shivakumar urged district administrations to engage with corporates to utilise these funds for school development. "The Corporates need not give the government any funds; they can build a school and hand it over to the government," he added, highlighting the need for efficient collaboration to establish model public schools across taluks. Regular progress reports will now be solicited from the districts.

—Salar News with agencies

HATE SPEECH: ANSARI'S SON GETS 2-YEAR JAIL

MAU, 31 MAY

Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari, son of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, was sentenced to two years imprisonment in a 2022 hate speech case by a special MP-MLA court on Saturday.

Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) MLA from Mau Sadar seat could face disqualification from the Assembly.

During the last assembly elections, Abbas, who was contesting as an SBSP candidate from Mau Sadar seat, had threatened the Mau administration during a public meeting at Paharpur ground on 3 March, 2022, saying he will teach them a lesson" after polls. Defence lawyer Daroga Singh told PTI videos that this order of the special court will now be challenged in the sessions court. Abbas has got temporary bail. He was sentenced in eight cases since 2022. *—PTI*

Lokayukta raids govt officials for asset misappropriation

BELAGAVI, 31 MAY

Karnataka Lokayukta officials conducted extensive raids at multiple locations across the state on Saturday, targeting government officials accused of accumulating assets disproportionate to their legitimate income sources. The operation encompassed seven districts: Belagavi, Bagalkote, Ballari, Udupi, Davanagere, Dharwad, and Gadag, as detailed in a press statement.

The raids focused on several officials, including Siddalingappa, District Manager at D Devaraj Urs Backward Abhivrudhi Nigama in Belagavi; Shaila Subash Tatrani, First Division Assistant in the Grameen Abhivrudhi and Panchyatraj Department in Bagalkote; and Amin Mukthar Ahmed, Superintendent Engineer for the Public Works Department in Ballari.

The operation encompassed seven districts: Belagavi, Bagalkote, Ballari, Udupi, Davanagere, Dharwad, and Gadag *PHOTO: PTI*

Other officials implicated in the raids are Ramkrishna, Panchayat Development Officer at Grama Panchayat Bada Village in Shiggaon Haveri; Girish Rao, Accountant at MESCOM in Karkala; Gangadhar Shirol, Project Director at Nirmiti Kendra in Gadag; and H Suresh, Chief Engineer for the Public Works Department, Communications and Building (N) Zone in Dharwad, according to the statement from Lokayukta officials. *—PTI*

'HOMEBOUND' DOP ACCUSED OF MISCONDUCT

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Cinematographer Pratik Shah, known for his work on Vikramaditya Motwane's 'Jubilee' and Neeraj Ghaywan's 'Homebound,' faces serious allegations of inappropriate behaviour after claims emerged on social media. Following the accusations, Shah has deactivated his Instagram account and has not responded to requests for comment.

Filmmaker Abhinav Singh initially cautioned his female followers about a "highly manipulative" cinematographer, later identifying Shah as the subject of his concerns. Singh reported receiving numerous messages from women sharing their experiences, leading him to publicly name Shah.

Dharma Productions, which produced 'Homebound', issued a statement asserting that Shah was a freelancer. The statement reiterated their zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment.

Several women, including photographer Anu Pattnaik and filmmaker Bhakti Jondhale, have come forward alleging similar experiences with Shah, including requests for inappropriate images. *—PTI*

COMBAT READY

Army conducts trials of next-generation defence systems

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Indian Army is conducting field trials of several cutting-edge defence systems under "near-combat conditions", integrating electronic warfare simulations, to assess their performance rigorously.

The trials aim to strengthen the Army's technological prowess and enhance its operational readiness.

The platforms undergoing evaluation include Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), UAV Launched Precision Guided Munition (ULPGM), Runway Independent (RWI) Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS) and counter-UAS solutions, the defence ministry said.

The trials also mark a significant step in the Army's roadmap for a "Decade of Transformation" and are designed to ensure "rapid absorption" of emerging technologies to meet "evolving battlefield requirements."

The Indian Army is currently undertaking extensive "capacity development demonstrations" at key locations across the country, including the Pokhran Field Firing Ranges, Babina Field Firing Ranges and Joshimath, with dedicated air-defence equipment demonstrations also scheduled at Agra and Gopalpur.

- These field trials are being conducted under near-combat conditions, integrating electronic warfare simulations, to assess the performance of cutting-edge defence systems rigorously

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi visited the Babina Field Firing Ranges to review the ongoing demonstrations and interacted with all stakeholders.

"These field trials are being conducted under near-combat conditions, integrating electronic warfare simulations, to assess the performance of cutting-edge defence systems rigorously," the ministry said.

The demonstrations feature a wide array of advanced technologies developed under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, aimed at accelerating indigenous capability development.

Other next-generation platforms being evaluated include loitering munitions, Specialised Vertical Launch (SVL) drones, Precision Multi Munition Delivery Systems, Integrated Drone Detection and Interdiction System (IDDIS), Low Level Light Weight Radars, Chords (Next Generation) IR Systems and Electronic Warfare (EW) platforms. A large number of defence industry partners are participating in the demonstrations, reflecting the increasing synergy between the Indian Army and domestic manufacturers. *—PTI*

Influencer arrested in Gurugram over communal post

GURUGRAM, 31 MAY

Kolkata Police arrested Sharmishtha Panoli, a Pune law student, for posting a video with alleged communal remarks on Instagram, criticising Bollywood's silence on Operation Sindoor in J&K. Despite deleting the video and apologising after backlash, she went into hiding, prompting a court-issued arrest warrant. She was held in Gurugram and will be brought to Kolkata. Meanwhile, Assam Police arrested Farijul Haque from Darrang for alleged pro-Pakistan sympathies, part of a broader crackdown after Pahalgam terror attack. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed 79 such arrests, with the NSA invoked in select cases. Authorities continue tightening action against communal speech and anti-national activity nationwide. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Commendation Disc awarded to BSF officer Neha

JAMMU, 31 MAY

Chief of Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, on Friday awarded Border Security Force (BSF) Assistant Commandant Neha Bhandari with the Commendation Disc for her exceptional courage and operational proficiency during Op Sindoor. Commanding a border outpost within eyeball-to-eyeball contact of a Pakistani post along IB, she led her troops to silence three forward hostile posts across zero line by giving a befitting reply. She gallantly commanded a forward-deployed BSF company under challenging conditions, it said. Apart from Neha, six women constables held gun positions at forward border post, with their "josh" rising with every bullet they fired at the enemy positions across IB in Samba, RS Pura and Akhnoor sectors. *—PTI*

Over 2K ineligible women benefiting from Ladki Bahin

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Maharashtra Minister Aditi Tatkare has revealed that over 2,200 ineligible recipients were found benefiting from the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana during a verification drive. In a post on X, she stated that 2,289 government employees, who are not entitled to the scheme, were identified among nearly two lakh scrutinised applications. These individuals have now been excluded. Launched in August 2024 by the Mahayuti government, the scheme provides eligible women aged 21 to 65 with a monthly assistance of Rs 1,500. Tatkare affirmed that verification will be a continuous process to ensure only qualified beneficiaries receive support. *—PTI*

100 days: Rekha Gupta highlights her govt's integrity

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta marked 100 days in office, highlighting her government's commitment to honest governance, public welfare, and structural reforms. Speaking at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, she criticised previous Aam Aadmi Party administration for neglecting civic issues, particularly the cleaning of the Yamuna River and waste management. Gupta emphasised that her government focused on policy-making rather than making empty promises. She announced plans to introduce an ordinance to regulate private school fees to make education fair and accessible. She also praised the success of the Vaya Vandana scheme, which provides health insurance up to Rs 10 lakh for those aged 70 and above, with 1.5 lakh registrations so far. This marks BJP's first rule in Delhi in 27 years. *—PTI*

Cong wants 'truth' on India's loss in Op Sindoor

Congress claims govt is trying to hide what really happened

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Congress asked the government on Saturday to truthfully tell the country what losses were suffered during the four-day conflict with Pakistan after Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan acknowledged aircraft loss in the hostilities.

Gen Chouhan, however, dismissed as "absolutely incorrect" Islamabad's claim of downing six Indian jets.

Latching on to the comment by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Congress leader Uttam Kumar Reddy said the country wanted to know whether any aircraft were downed during the conflict, especially in the wake of the CDS' "admission".

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said that on 29 July, 1999, the Vajpayee government set up the Kargil Review Committee under the Chairmanship of "India's strategic affairs Guru K Subrahmanyam, whose son is now our external affairs minister".

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan PHOTO: ANI

This was just three days after the Kargil war ended, he said.

"The committee submitted its detailed report five months later. The report titled 'From Surprise to Reckoning' was then laid on the Table of both Houses of Parliament on February 23, 2000, after the necessary redactions.

"Will the Modi government now take a similar step in light of what the Chief of Defence Staff has just revealed in Singapore?" Ramesh posed in a post on X.

At a press conference, the Congress leader said, "Earlier, Air Marshal (Awadesh Kumar) Bharti had mentioned it indirectly in his briefing along with the DGMO. He specifically said that 'losses are normal in combat; the mission objective of the operation has been achieved, and all pilots have come home'."

- Latching on to the comment by the CDS, Congress leader Uttam Kumar Reddy said the country wanted to know whether any aircraft were downed during the conflict, especially in the wake of the CDS' "admission".

He said when Rahul Gandhi first pointed it out in a question to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, it was "very bizarre and strange" that the ruling party functionaries at all levels accused him of not being patriotic.

Reddy claimed the government was trying to, somehow, not come out clearly with what really has happened. *– PTI*

Trump takes credit for ceasefire for the 11th time in 21 days

NEW YORK, 31 MAY

US President Donald Trump has reiterated his claim that he brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, stating that he is proud of having stopped a potential nuclear war through trade rather than military conflict. This marks the 11th time in 21 days that Trump has made this assertion.

During a press conference, Trump remarked, "I think the deal I'm most proud of is that we were able to stop potentially a nuclear war through trade." He noted that both countries are nuclear powers and expressed his satisfaction at averting conflict.

The Indian government, however, rejected Trump's claims, stating that discussions concerning the cessation of hostilities were carried out directly between military leaders from both nations rather than through US intervention. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence regarding Trump's assertions, questioning when PM would address the issue. He emphasised risk of equating India and Pakistan in these discussions and urged government to clarify Trump's narrative.

The tension between India and Pakistan flared recently following a deadly terror attack in J&K, leading to cross-border strikes. As diplomatic discussions continue, Indian government maintains its stance that bilateral talks are preferred route to resolve conflicts without third-party involvement. *– PTI*

'DOUBLE-FACED PAK GO'

Colombia withdraws statement offering condolences to Pak

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor with an all-party delegation member and and others during a meeting with members of the Colombian Council on International Relations, in Bogota, Colombia PHOTO: PTI

BOGOTA, 31 MAY

Colombia has retracted a statement offering condolences to Pakistan following the loss of lives due to India's military strikes in response to the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, confirmed Shashi Tharoor, a Congress MP leading an all-party delegation. In discussions with Vice Foreign Minister Rosa Yolanda Villavicencio, Tharoor articulated India's "zero tolerance for terrorism" and expressed disappointment over Colombia's initial stance. The Vice Minister assured Tharoor that Colombia's position was now properly understood and supported.

The nine-member delegation, which included representatives from various Indian political parties, is part of India's global outreach to highlight Pakistan's backing of cross-border terrorism. Meetings in Colombia extended to prominent political figures, including Alejandro Toro, the president of Second Commission of the Chamber of Representatives, both of whom expressed strong support for India's right to self-defence.

Former union minister MJ Akbar, also part of the delegation, ridiculed Pakistan's government as "double-faced," asserting that engagements with Islamabad merely provide a facade for preparatory actions against India.

In a parallel diplomatic mission, an Indian delegation to Sierra Leone received strong backing for its counter-terrorism stance. Sierra Leone's officials underscored the necessity for African unity against the menace of terrorism, condemning the Pahalgam attack and calling for coordinated international action.

The Indian delegations are part of a broader strategy following India's Operation Sindoor. *– PTI*

At the UN conference on glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh condemned Pakistan's attempts to politicise the forum PHOTO: PTI

India urges Pak to stop misusing ITW forum

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India has urged Pakistan to refrain from blaming it for breaching the Indus Waters Treaty, citing ongoing cross-border terrorism from Pakistani territory as a hindrance to the treaty's implementation.

At the UN conference on glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh condemned Pakistan's attempts to politicise the forum. He emphasised that substantial changes since the treaty was signed, including technological advancements, demographic shifts, climate change, and persistent terrorism threats, necessitate a reevaluation of the treaty's obligations.

Singh stated, "Pakistan, which itself is in violation of the treaty, should desist from putting the blame for the breach on India." His comments came in response to Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who asserted that India must not suspend the treaty for political reasons following a recent attack. *– PTI*

PM Modi calls 'Sindoor' a symbol of valour

BHOPAL, 31 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday declared that "sindoor" has become a symbol of valour in India, attributing its significance to the country's military response following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Speaking at the Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Mahila Sashaktikaran Maha Sammelan, Modi warned Pakistan that "bullets will be answered with cannon balls," after the Indian armed forces executed missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir earlier this month.

The operation, termed Op Sindoor, was a response to the attack in Pahalgam.

Modi explained that sindoor, traditionally a mark of marital status for Hindu women, has now come to symbolise bravery within the context of this military action.

Further, Modi praised women's empowerment, highlighting recent achievement of women in Parliament and the military. *– PTI*

TMC leader declines UDF alliance

MALAPPURAM, 31 MAY

PV Anvar, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) state convener, has publicly announced his decision to withdraw from the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) alliance. He stated he would not contest the upcoming Nilambur assembly by-election due to financial constraints, following a day of negotiations regarding his potential inclusion in the UDF.

Anvar's announcement comes after the UDF expressed interest in incorporating him if he retracted critical remarks aimed at UDF candidate Aryadan Shoukath. During a press briefing, Anvar firmly stated he would not join the UDF at this juncture, asserting that no one from the coalition should reach out to him any further.

PV Anvar PHOTO: ANI

- During a press briefing, Anvar firmly stated he would not join the UDF at this juncture, asserting that no one from the coalition should reach out to him any further.

The Congress party is reportedly hopeful about Anvar reconsidering his stance. Party leaders indicated that rooms for dialogue remain open, suggesting he may yet join the alliance. Anvar accused Congress leader VD Satheesan of obstructing his integration into the UDF, attributing negative influences from certain factions within the party.

Despite his withdrawal, Anvar remains focused on advocating for his constituents, especially those from the farming community, and has pledged to continue his political fight against what he views as detrimental governance from both the ruling Left government and the BJP. *– PTI*

DELHI HC REJECTS LALU PRASAD'S PLEA IN LAND-FOR-JOBS SCAM CASE

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Saturday dismissed RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav's plea seeking to stay trial court proceedings in a CBI case concerning the land-for-jobs scam.

The court declined to halt trial, noting that the matter is already listed before the Special Judge for arguments on the charges. It observed that Yadav is entitled to raise all his contentions at the trial stage, describing this as an added opportunity for him to present his case.

Earlier, Lalu had approached the Delhi High Court to quash the FIR registered by the CBI, arguing that the investigation proceeded without the necessary sanction.

On 9 May, President granted sanction to prosecute Lalu under Section 197(1) of Criminal Procedure Code. *– Agencies*

BJP wants to form popular govt in Manipur: Sharda

IMPHAL, 31 MAY

The BJP wants to form a "popular" government in Manipur, the party's state President **A Sharda Devi** said on Saturday after chairing a meeting with some of the MLAs.

Thirteen BJP MLAs attended the meeting, which was held at the party's state headquarters in the capital, Imphal.

"Our MLAs are united than before. The formation of a government is the responsibility of all legislators. The party also wants the formation of a popular government. We are in the process of achieving that," Sharda Devi said.

BJP MLA Kh Ibomcha said the formation of a government depends on the Centre.

Another MLA, Paonam Brojen, said there are no differences within the party.

"We came here to urge our president to seek permission from central leaders to form the government," he said.

On Friday night, 23 BJP MLAs held a meeting at the official residence of former minister Th Biswajit and asserted that a long-term solution to the crisis in the state was both possible and necessary.

A joint statement signed by them acknowledged the "public desire to see the formation of a popular government".

"We discussed pathways to achieve this with unity and selflessness. We resolve to put aside personal ambitions in the larger interests of the state, its people, and the vision of the BJP and its alliance partners in Manipur," it said.

Manipur has been under President's Rule, and the 60-member assembly has been put under suspended animation since February after BJP leader N Biren Singh resigned as the chief minister. *– PTI*

'UNANNOUNCED & UNSOLICITED'

Dubai Kerala community apologies after outrage over Afridi at event

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 31 MAY

A Kerala expatriate community in Dubai, which is facing intense online backlash over a warm welcome extended to Pakistan cricketer Shahid Afridi in a recent programme, has apologised for the incident and clarified that it was not intentional.

The Cochin University Btech Alumni Association (CUBAA), UAE, has been under attack for some days after a video, showcasing Afridi being welcomed enthusiastically during a recent programme organised by them in Dubai, went viral on social media handles.

In the video, it can be seen that the crowd cheering Afridi and chanting his nickname "boom boom" when he addressed the gathering. In his brief address, the cricketer was seen praising Kerala and its cuisines.

The expatriate community reiterated their commitment to maintaining the cultural and inclusive spirit of our country PHOTO: X

- In the video, it can be seen that the crowd cheering Afridi and chanting his nickname "boom boom" when he addressed the gathering.

When a social media user described the act as "shameful", another netizen said "they are fetting someone who has been trash-talking our country."

As the Kerala community's programme was concluding, these cricketers made an "unannounced and unsolicited appearance" at their event, which was held in the same auditorium, they further said.

They further said as their visit was a surprise, they were unable to manage the crowd response appropriately in that short span of time.

"We regret any confusion or inconvenience caused to attendees, participants, or supporters due to this unplanned development. We deeply regret any hurt or offense our actions may have caused. It was never our intention, and we sincerely apologise to those affected," they said.

The expatriate community also reiterated their commitment to maintaining the cultural and inclusive spirit of our country. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi reports first Covid-19 death

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi has reported its first covid-19-related death during the current surge, involving a 60-year-old woman whose positive status was deemed incidental as she was already suffering from acute intestinal obstruction. There are currently 294 active cases in the capital, with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta assuring the public that the situation is under control and that hospitals are adequately prepared. Meanwhile, in Arunachal Pradesh, a 51-year-old man has tested positive for Covid-19, bringing the total to three cases. Among the infected is a pregnant woman who exhibited mild symptoms after arriving from Bengaluru. The state health department is actively monitoring the situation and tracing contacts to prevent further spread. *—PTI*

Man walks with sister-in-law's severed head, held

KOLKATA, 31 MAY

A man was apprehended on Saturday in the Basanti area of West Bengal' South 24 Parganas district after he was reportedly found walking with the severed head of his sister-in-law. The suspect was detained in Bharatgarh following alerts from local residents, who witnessed the gruesome sight. Initial investigations indicated that a scuffle occurred between the man and the victim the previous night, during which the woman was allegedly murdered with a sickle-like weapon. A forensic team has been dispatched to the crime scene as the inquiry continues. The body have been sent for post-mortem, and authorities have recovered the weapon involved in the incident. *—PTI*

Kerala shipwreck container found near TN coast

NAGERCOIL, 31 MAY

An expert team from Gujarat successfully recovered a container from the wreckage of the Liberian vessel MSC Elsa 3, which washed ashore in Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari district. The container was located at Vaniyakudi fishing village. The recovery operation involved specialists from the Marine Engineering Resources Centre in Porbandar and staff from the local fisheries department. Teams from various departments, including the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, were engaged in cleaning up plastic nurdles and debris found along the coastal villages after the ship had sank near Alappuzha in Kerala on 24 May. A 24/7 control room has been established to assist locals as efforts to protect the environment continue. *—PTI*

M'rashtra awards Rs 58.26 lakh to accident victim

THANE, 31 MAY

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) in Maharashtra's Thane has awarded Rs 58.26 lakh to Arvind Bhikhala Parmar, a former accountant who lost his leg following a severe accident. The tribunal's decision pertained to an incident in February 2021, when a bus collided with Parmar's two-wheeler in Mumbai, leading to his left leg being amputated. The victim earned Rs 25,000 per month before the accident, which left him 80 per cent disabled. The tribunal ultimately deemed his occupational disability to be 100 per cent due to the nature of his injuries. The case was brought to the MACT as the bus insurance was managed by a Thane branch of a national insurer. *—PTI*

Heavy rains belt several states, many lives lost

Several dead in landslides, flash floods; Northeast suffers

GUWAHATI/ ITANAGAR/ AIZWAL/ THIRUTHAPURAM/ GANGTOK, 31 MAY

Rescue personnel assist affected people in moving to a safer place after waterlogging due to heavy rainfall, in Guwahati, Assam *PHOTO: PTI*

Assam

Five persons were killed in landslides as incessant rain led to floods in six districts, affecting over 10,000 people.

All five deaths occurred in Kamrup Metropolitan district.

Urban Affairs Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah had on Friday said that three members of a family, a mother-daughter duo and a niece, were killed in a landslide in Bonda area on the outskirts of Guwahati.

Floods have been reported in Kamrup (Metropolitan), Kamrup, Cachar, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Golaghat districts, affecting 10,150 people.

A red alert has been issued in Chirang, Baksa, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Bajali, Tamulpur, Darrang and Udalguri.

Arunachal Pradesh

Heavy rainfall has led to flash floods and landslides in several districts. At least nine people were reportedly killed.

Landslides have also been reported from Kurung Kumey, Kamle, and Lower Subansiri districts, leading to road blockades.

A red alert has been issued in Lower Subansiri, West Kameng, West Siang, Lohit, and Changlang.

Mizoram

Four, including three Myanmar refugees were killed and one injured after several houses and a hotel collapsed due to landslides triggered by heavy rain in Lawngtlai town,

Relief operations were underway to rescue several others, believed to be trapped under the hotel's debris.

Kerala

Hundreds of people were shifted to relief camps from low-lying areas of Kerala with monsoon rains gaining further strength in the state.

Inundation occurred in high ranges and neighbouring towns in northern districts.

Floods were reported in Kozhikode and Kannur districts

Moderate rainfall accompanied by strong surface wind is likely in Thiruvanan thapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Kannur districts.

Sikkim

At least 500 tourists were stranded in various parts of North Sikkim as the main road was blocked by landslides. Search for the missing eight tourists was called off after the water level in the Teesta river increased. *—PTI*

ON INTERIM BAIL

Chhattisgarh coal scam: 6 officials released

RAIPUR, 31 MAY

- The ED had arrested Sameer Vishnoi and Saumya Chaurasia in 2022 and Ranu Sahu in 2023 in the allegedly Rs 500 crore coal scam

Two days after being granted interim bail by the Supreme Court in the Chhattisgarh coal-levy scam case, two suspended IAS officers and a former deputy secretary in the chief minister's office walked out of jail on Saturday.

Defence counsel Faizal Rizvi said that IAS officers, Sameer Vishnoi and Ranu Sahu, and Saumya Chaurasia, a deputy secretary in the chief minister's office during the previous Bhupesh Baghel government and three others were released from Raipur central jail.

The SC has granted interim bail to eight persons, of whom Suryakant Tiwari and Nikhil Chandrakar have not been released.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which probed the money laundering angle in the scam, arrested Vishnoi and Chaurasia in 2022 and Sahu in 2023.

A Supreme Court bench on 29 May imposed several conditions on the accused while granting them interim bail in two cases related to the scam.

The state government was to generate confidence among the witnesses, ensuring their protection.

The trio was directed to stay out of Chhattisgarh till further orders, except when their presence was required before the investigating agency or the trial court.

They will have to furnish their current addresses to the jurisdictional police station within one week of their release.

An illegal levy of Rs 25 per tonne was being extorted for every tonne of coal transported in Chhattisgarh by a cartel involving senior bureaucrats, businessmen, politicians and middlemen.

Rs 540 crore was allegedly extorted in cash by the coal cartel between July 2020 and June 2022. *—PTI*

Parents of Ankita Bhandari, after the accused were sentenced to rigorous life imprisonment by Kotdwar Court in the murder case *PHOTO: ANI*

Ankita Bhandari's parents to move HC

DEHRADUN, 31 MAY

Ankita Bhandari's mother Soni Devi said that a bigger battle lay ahead to get the death penalty for three men who had killed her daughter.

A court in Kotwar on 30 May convicted resort owner Pulkit Arya and his two employees Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta, awarding them with life imprisonment

"A bigger battle is yet to be fought so that the killers get the death penalty and people think before doing such a thing to anyone's daughter, said Devi tearfully.

Ankita, 19, worked as a receptionist at Vanantra Resort located in Yamkeshwar in Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal district. The accused had murdered her by pushing her into the Cheela canal in Rishikesh.

Devis said only death penalty for the accused will bring her satisfaction.

Ankita's father Virendra Bhandari said that he would challenge the decision in the high court. *—PTI*

Film director gets bail in rape case

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Sanoj Kumar Mishra *PHOTO: PTI*

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to film director Sanoj Kumar Mishra, who was accused of raping a woman.

The court observed that the case highlighted a growing trend of false allegations in sexual offence cases.

In her affidavit, the woman mentioned she had a consensual relationship with Mishra and claimed her complaint was influenced by rivals of the director.

Justice Girish Kathpalia was informed by the station house officer of Nabi Karim that steps had begun to register a counter FIR against the complainant and others for allegedly conspiring to force the complaint.

"Every false complaint of sexual offences not only inflicts tremendous damage on the accused, but also fosters distrust in society, causing even genuine victims to face skepticism," the court stated.

Mishra's counsel argued that his client was being falsely implicated in order to coerce him into providing opportunities in the film industry.

The court noted that both parties had previously lived together.

The incident occurred in Madhya Pradesh's Orcha, making Delhi an inappropriate jurisdiction.

The court granted bail to Mishra upon submission of a personal bond and surety, both set at Rs 10,000. *—PTI*

KUKI GROUPS DEMAND BUFFER ZONES IN MANIPUR

SDFADSDS

Kuki groups on Saturday demanded that buffer zones should be maintained in Manipur as a "protective measure" unless a comprehensive political solution such as a Union territory with legislature is achieved.

Kuki Zo Women Forum's co-convener Chong Haokip said the demand for a Union territory should be seen as a requirement for safety and peace as Kuki people were killed and displaced in the state.

C Thangminlal Doungel, interim president of Kuki Students' Organisation Delhi & NCR, said buffer zones were required to halt violence and restore order.

The KSO Delhi & NCR also demanded that the government should "fence the buffer zones" and the Manipur governor be made the Lt. Governor of the newly-created Union territory with legislature for Kukis.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo since May 2023. President's Rule was imposed in Manipur on 13 February after N Biren Singh resigned as chief minister. *—PTI*

ANTI-DRONE SYSTEM DEPLOYED TO PROTECT TAJ MAHAL

AGRA, 31 MAY

The anti-drone system is capable of disabling drones within an 8-km radius *PHOTO: ANI*

An anti-drone system has been installed at the Taj Mahal to strengthen security around the iconic monument, police announced on Friday.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Taj Security) Syed Arib Ahmed said the system is set up within the Taj Mahal grounds and can disable any drone entering the restricted airspace. Surveillance covers a 500m radius around the site, with any detected drone within this area being swiftly neutralised.

Although the system has the capability to disable drones up to an 8km radius, monitoring is currently limited to 500M due to the monument's sensitive security needs.

The technology uses radio frequency and GPS signal jamming to disable drones. Once a drone is grounded, a rapid response team is dispatched to secure the device and trace the operator. *—PTI*

New cave fish species discovered in Meghalaya

GUWAHATI, 31 MAY

The discovery was made in Krem Mawjingbuiñ, a cave located just 15km from Mawsynram beside Sohra *PHOTO: X*

Researchers from Gauhati University and Lady Keane College in Shillong have discovered a new species of cave-dwelling loach, Schistura densiclava, in Meghalaya. This marks the sixth unique cave fish species found in the northeastern state and the ninth such discovery by the Gauhati University team.

The discovery, made in the limestone cave Krem Mawjymbuin near Mawsynram, highlights Meghalaya's extraordinary biodiversity. Cave-dwelling fish like Schistura densiclava are specially adapted to life in dark subterranean environments, often exhibiting features such as blindness.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma praised the researchers for their dedication to advancing scientific knowledge. He described the discovery as a testament to the state's rich ecological heritage and called for further research to understand and conserve this unique biodiversity.

The finding has also received international attention, with a prominent foreign news outlet featuring the discovery, thereby bringing global recognition to the ecological wealth of India's northeast region.

The teams were led by Kangkan Sarma of Gauhati University and Khlur B Mukhim of Lady Keane College. *— PTI*

NIA chargesheets 3 Naxals in Jharkhand

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against three Naxals accused of extortion and forced recruitment in Jharkhand.

The supplementary chargesheet, submitted on 31 May to a special court in Ranchi, named Krishna Hansda alias Saurav alia Avinash, Abhijit Korah alias Matla Korah alias Sunil Korah and Ramdayal Mahto alias Nilesh alias Bachchan. Hansda is a regional committee member of the banned CPI (Maoist), Korah an armed cadre, and Mahto a special area committee member. Korah is from Bihar, while the others are natives of Jharkhand. The trio is accused of involvement in a 2023 terrorist conspiracy case, including extortion, armed intimidation, and forced recruitment. *—PTI*

MOUNUMENTAL LOSS

Tiger conservation pioneer Valmik Thapar dies at 73

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

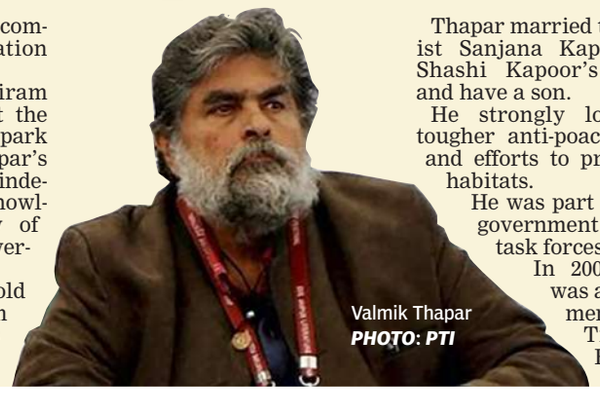
Valmik Thapar, one of India's most eminent wildlife conservationists and authors, died at his residence on Saturday morning. He was 73.

Born in New Delhi in 1952, Thapar dedicated his life to the study and conservation of wild tigers, especially in Rajasthan's Ranthambore National Park.

He co-founded the Ranthambhore Foundation in 1988, a non-governmental organisation focused on community-based conservation efforts.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on X that the Ranthambore National park is a testimony to Thapar's deep commitment and indefatigable zeal. He was knowledgeable on a variety of issues relating to biodiversity.

He graduated with a gold medal in sociology from Delhi's St Stephen's College.



Valmik Thapar *PHOTO: PTI*

Thapar married theatre artist Sanjana Kapoor, actor Shashi Kapoor's daughter and have a son.

He strongly lobbied for tougher anti-poaching rules and efforts to protect tiger habitats.

He was part of over 150 government panels and task forces.

In 2005, Thapar was appointed a member of the Tiger Task Force that reviewed the management of tiger reserves.

Thapar expressed concern that the task force's report was overly optimistic about the coexistence of tigers and humans, arguing that for tigers to survive, certain areas needed to be kept free from human interference.

Thapar authored or edited over 30 books on wildlife, including 'Land of the Tiger: A Natural History of the Indian Subcontinent' and 'Tiger Fire: 500 Years of the Tiger in India'.

He also presented and co-produced several well-known films for channels like BBC.

He featured in the documentary, 'My Tiger Family', showcasing his 50 years of observing wild tigers.

Thapar had strong reservations about Project Cheetah. He argued that India lacked the necessary habitat or prey base and experienced manpower to support free-ranging African cheetahs. *—PTI*

A SMOKY WALK

Amid the billowing wildfire smoke, a tourist takes his dogs out for a quick walk in Highway 97 north of Buckinghorse River, British Columbia, on Friday. The wildfire in Canada's westernmost province quadrupled in size over two days *PHOTO: PTI*

Career pathways in US dim for int'l students

Many international students come to the US with hopes of gaining work experience and returning to their home countries or pursuing a career in the US *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Since coming from China as a teenager for boarding school, Bob Zeng has imagined building a career in the United States.

But as he prepared to graduate Thursday from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it felt like the last chapter of his life in America.

Zeng said he has been rethinking his plans because of the Trump administration's pledge to aggressively revoke the visas of Chinese students. Having completed a masters degree in science and management, he is thinking about moving to Europe. Or going home to China.

"I am worried about working here," said Zeng, 30. "You never know what's going to happen."

Many international students come to the US with hopes of gaining work experience and returning to their home countries or pursuing a career in the US. But the administration's intensifying scrutiny of international students — and signs that formal career pathways for them may be closed — are leading some to reconsider their plans.

Beyond the steps the administration already has taken — expanding the grounds for terminating students' ability to study in the US, adding new vetting for student visas, moving to block foreign enrolment at Harvard — a key nominee has raised the possibility of ending a programme that encourages international students to stay and gain work experience.

About 240,000 of the 1.1 million people on student visas in US are on Optional Practical Training — a one-year post-graduation period where they are authorized to work in fields related to their degrees.

President Donald Trump's nominee for director of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, Joseph Edlow, said during his confirmation hearing on 21 May that he would like to see an end to post-graduate work authorization for international students.

"What I want to see would be essentially a regulatory and sub-regulatory program that would allow us to remove the ability for employment authorizations for F-1 students beyond the time that they are in school," said Edlow, referring to the F-1 visas on which most international students attend college in US.

The opportunity to gain career experience at US companies, especially in technology and other fields where American companies dominate, has long been a draw of studying here.

Threatening practical training opportunities would have long-term consequences for the US in attracting international students, said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, which represents international educators.

Like many international students, Marko, 29, finds himself glued to the news with a growing sense of alarm. His Optional Practical Training expires in a month, and he has applied for an extension but hasn't heard back, leaving him in limbo. Lawyers for the tech company where he works in New York City advised him to carry proof of his legal status in his wallet, which he finds "dehumanising."

"The message being sent now is that: You are not one of us, and we are going to get rid of you," said Marko, who asked that only his first name be used because he is worried about being targeted for removal from the country.

Guy, an HIV researcher at Mount Sinai Hospital who declined to provide his last name for fear of retaliation, came to the United States in 2018 for a PhD program at New York University. He's now in his second year of OPT and would have to return to the United Kingdom if the program was terminated. Although he still feels welcome in New York City, he said it feels like there's a "war on immigrants in this country."

In his first administration, Trump floated the idea of curtailing OPT, but that did not materialize. During the campaign, he suggested he would give green cards to foreign students who graduate from US colleges, a sentiment that students and educators hoped would signal more welcoming policies.

But his administration has cracked down on international students in several ways.

This week, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced the government would move to revoke visas of Chinese students with connections to the Chinese Communist Party or studying in "critical" fields.

Yurong "Luanna" Jiang, a Chinese student who graduated Thursday from Harvard University, said in an interview that she had hoped to stay in the US for a few years but she has been unsettled by the Trump administration's crackdown on visas. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

France ends its long-term romance with cigarettes

Brigitte Bardot lounged barefoot on a Saint-Tropez beach, drawing languorous puffs from her cigarette. Another actor, Jean-Paul Belmondo, swaggered down the Champs-Elysees with smoke curling from his defiant lips, capturing a generation's restless rebellion.

In France, cigarettes were never just cigarettes — they were cinematic statements, flirtations and rebellions wrapped in rolling paper.

Yet beginning 1 July, if Bardot and Belmondo's iconic film scenes were repeated in real life, they would be subject to up to USD 153 in fines.

After glamorising tobacco for decades, France is preparing for its most sweeping smoking ban yet.

The new restrictions, announced by Health Minister Catherine Vautrin, will outlaw smoking in virtually all outdoor public areas where children may gather, including beaches, parks, gardens, playgrounds, sports venues, school entrances and bus stops.

"Tobacco must disappear where there are children," Vautrin told French media. The freedom to smoke "stops where children's right to breathe clean air starts".

If Vautrin's law reflects public health priorities, it also signals a deeper cultural shift. Smoking has defined identity, fashion and cinema here for so long that the new measure feels like a quiet French revolution in a country whose relationship with tobacco is famously complex.

According to France's League Against Cancer, over 90 per cent of French films from 2015 to 2019 featured smoking scenes — more than double the rate in Hollywood productions. Each French movie averaged nearly three minutes of on-screen smoking, effectively the same exposure as six 30-second television ads.

Cinema has been particularly influential. Belmondo's rebellious smoker in Jean-Luc Godard's "Breathless" became shorthand for youthful defiance worldwide. Bardot's cigarette smoke wafted through "And God Created Woman", symbolising unbridled sensuality.

Yet this glamorisation has consequences. According to France's public health authorities, around 75,000 people die from tobacco-related illnesses each year.

Although smoking rates have dipped recently — fewer than 25 per cent of French adults now smoke daily, a historic low — the habit remains stubbornly embedded, especially among young people and the urban chic.

France's relationship with tobacco has long been fraught with contradiction. Air France did not ban smoking on all its flights until 2000, years after major US carriers began phasing it out in the late 1980s and early '90s.

The delay reflected a country slower to sever its cultural romance with cigarettes, even at 35,000 feet.

Strolling through the stylish streets of Le Marais, the trendiest neighbourhood in Paris, reactions to the smoking ban ranged from pragmatic acceptance to nostalgic defiance.

"It's about time. I don't want my kids growing up thinking smoke is romantic," said Clémence Laurent, a 34-year-old fashion buyer, sipping espresso at a crowded café terrace. "Sure, Bardot made cigarettes seem glamorous. But Bardot didn't worry about today's warnings on lung cancer."

At a nearby boutique, vintage dealer Luc Baudry, 53, saw the ban as an attack on something essentially French. "Smoking has always been part of our culture.

Take away cigarettes and what do we have left? Kale smoothies?" he scoffed.

Across from him, 72-year-old Jeanne Lévy chuckled throatily, her voice deeply etched — she said — by decades of Gauloises. "I smoked my first cigarette watching Jeanne Moreau," she confessed, eyes twinkling behind vintage sunglasses. "It was her voice — smoky, sexy, lived-in. Who didn't want that voice?"

Indeed, Jeanne Moreau's gravelly, nicotine-scraped voice transformed tobacco into poetry itself, immortalised in classics such as François Truffaut's "Jules et Jim".

Smoking acquired an existential glamour that made quitting unimaginable for generations of French smokers.

France's new law mirrors broader European trends. Britain, Spain and Sweden have all implemented significant smoking bans in public spaces.

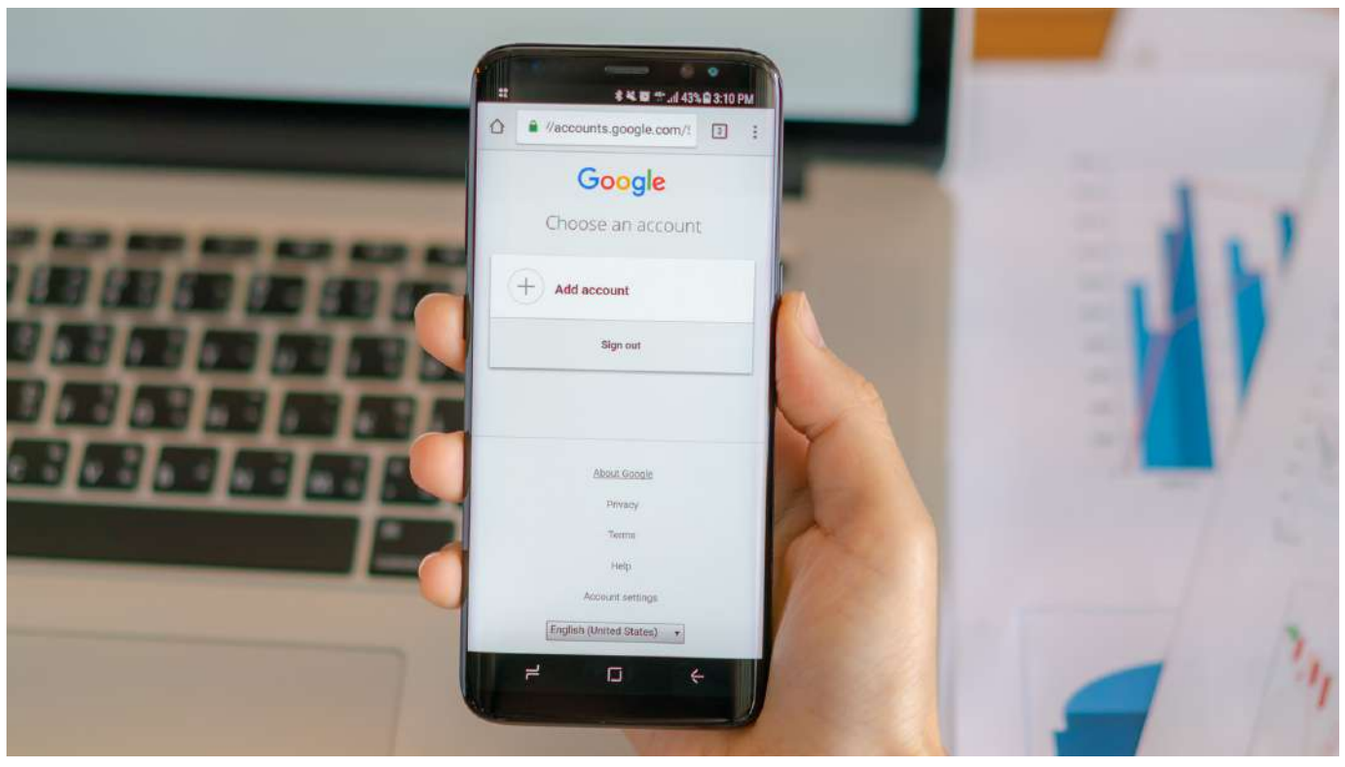
Sweden outlawed smoking in outdoor restaurant terraces, bus stops and schoolyards back in 2019. Spain extended its bans to cafe terraces, spaces still exempt in France — at least for now.

In the Paris park Place des Vosges, literature student Thomas Bouchard clutched an electronic cigarette that is still exempt from the new ban and shrugged.

"Maybe vaping's our compromise," he said, exhaling gently. "A little less sexy, perhaps. But fewer wrinkles too." *—PTI*

In France, cigarettes were never just cigarettes — they were cinematic statements, flirtations and rebellions wrapped in rolling paper *PHOTO: PTI*

Google going 'all in' on AI as part of troubling trend in big tech



This new feature will soon be released for Google's search engine users in the US, with no timeline yet for the rest of the world *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Google recently unveiled the next phase of its artificial intelligence (AI) journey: "AI mode".

This new feature will soon be released as a new option to users of Google's search engine in US, with no timeline yet for the rest of the world. The company says it will be akin to having a conversation with an expert well versed on a wide range of topics.

This is just one of many steps Google is taking in pursuit of its "all-in" approach to AI.

This approach extends beyond just integrating the technology into different applications. Google is providing products all along the AI supply chain – a process known as "vertical integration" – housing everything from AI computer chips through to the user interfaces we interact with on a daily basis, such as Google maps or Gmail.

This may be the beginning of a trend of vertical integration across big tech. And it could have significant implications for users and companies alike.

Hardware, software, data sources, databases and servers are some of the layers that make up what is commonly referred to as the "AI tech stack".

In hardware layer, Google develops its own AI chips, known as tensor processing units. The company claims these chips provide superior performance and efficiency compared to general purpose processors.

In infrastructure layer, the company uses its own cloud infrastructure to source its computing power, networking and storage requirements. This infrastructure is the foundation for running and scaling AI capabilities.

In model development layer, in-house research capabilities are used to drive the development of their products and services. This includes research around machine learning, robotics, language models and computer vision.

In data layer, Data is constantly sourced from users across all Google platforms, including its search engine, maps and email. Data collection is a condition of using any Google application.

Some argue vertical integration is an optimal and cost-effective business strategy in many industries, not just tech. However, the realities of this set-up prove otherwise.

Google and OpenAI are two of just a handful of companies which dominate the global technology market.

Thanks to this market dominance, these companies can charge higher markups for their goods and services and abuse practices in online advertising.

Vertical integration further skews this power imbalance by centralising the layers of the AI tech stack to one company. A distribution of hardware, infrastructure, research and development and data across multiple industries helps support a more equitable playing field across the industry.

Data is often described as the new gold. This is especially true in the case of AI, which is heavily reliant on data. Through its many platforms, Google has access to a continuous stream of data. In turn, this gives the company even more power in the industry.

The success of a company that is vertically integrated relies on housing the best knowledge and expertise in-house.

Research shows knowledge and expertise hoarding reduces social learning and increases disparities between "winners" and "losers" in a given market. Exclusivity also breeds a lack of resilience.

Risk is better managed with additional oversight, transparency and accountability. Collaborations across industry rely on these processes to work together effectively.

Centralising the AI tech stack within one organisation eliminates external scrutiny, because it reduces interactions with external providers of products and services. In turn this can lead to a company behaving in a more risky manner.

Regulatory bodies can also provide external scrutiny.

However, the current push to deregulate AI is widening the gap between technology development and regulation.

It is also allowing for big tech companies to become increasingly opaque. A lack of transparency raises issues about organisational practices; in the context of AI, practices around data are of particular concern. *—PTI*

Poland set for Presidential runoff election today

WARSAW, 31 MAY

Poland is gearing up for a critical presidential runoff election on Sunday amid contrasting visions for the country's future. Candidates Rafal Trzaskowski, the liberal mayor of Warsaw, and conservative historian Karol Nawrocki will face off to succeed outgoing President Andrzej Duda. The election comes against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and internal debates over democracy and security. Polls indicate a neck-and-neck race. Nawrocki's campaign is bolstered by endorsements from US conservatives, while critics highlight his questionable past and connections to controversies. Key issues include security, judicial independence, and women's rights, particularly in light of the restrictive abortion laws under the previous government. *—PTI*

Quarry collapse in Indonesia: Death toll rises to 14

CIREBON, 31 MAY

The death toll from a quarry collapse in Indonesia has risen to 14, with more than 20 individuals trapped under the rubble at Gunung Kuda site. The incident occurred on Friday, prompting a rapid response from rescuers who managed to recover 10 bodies and a dozen injured workers. Local authorities reported that six to eight people remain unaccounted for as search efforts continue. West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi stated the quarry was deemed dangerous during a prior visit and has ordered its closure along with four similar sites. Informal mining operations are prevalent in Indonesia, with significant risks to workers' safety often leading to fatal accidents. Previously, a landslide in Sumatra killed at least 15 individuals. *—PTI*

One killed amid BLA's attack on Sorab city

ISLAMABAD, 31 MAY

A senior Pakistani official was killed during a militant attack by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) in Sorab city on Friday. The assault involved the seizing of local government offices, looting a bank, and setting fire to officials' residences. Additional Deputy Commissioner Hidayat Buledi Baloch was fatally wounded while attempting to protect state property. Government spokesperson Shahid Rind condemned the attack as a direct challenge to state authority, labelling it a cowardly act aimed at destabilising the region. In response, security forces were deployed to the city. Balochistan has been plagued by insurgency, with locals accusing govt of exploiting the region. *—PTI*

Taylor Swift regains control of first six albums

NEW YORK, 31 MAY

Taylor Swift has announced that she has regained full control over her music catalogue, proudly declaring that all her works now belong to her. This follows her purchase of her recordings released by Big Machine Records from Shamrock Capital, although financial terms remain undisclosed. Swift, who has been re-recording her first six albums in a bid to reclaim ownership after controversial sale expressed gratitude to her fans for their support in this endeavour. "The best things that have ever been mine... finally actually are," she wrote. She has had huge success with her re-recordings. *—PTI*

Hegseth warns Asia of 'imminent' China threat

US to bolster its defences overseas to prep

SINGAPORE/ WASHINGTON 31 MAY

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and French President Emmanuel Macron keynote speeches at a major security conference in Singapore focussed on China, albeit taking slightly different stands.

While Hegseth urged Indo-Pacific countries on Saturday to increase their defence spending in the face of increased Chinese military presence, Macron called for European and Asian nations to build a "positive new alliance" to avoid being dragged into the growing rivalry between the US and China.

Hegseth said Washington will bolster its defences overseas to counter what the Pentagon sees as rapidly developing threats by Beijing, particularly in its aggressive stance toward Taiwan. China has increased military exercises to test what a blockade of the self-governing island would look like.

China's army "is rehearsing for the real deal," Hegseth said. "We are not going to sugarcoat it — the threat China poses is real. And it could be imminent."

He urged countries in the region to increase defence spending to levels similar to the 5 per cent of their gross domestic product European nations are now pressed to contribute.

Later, Macron singled out the China-US rivalry as the biggest risk confronting the world. "Our shared responsibility is to ensure that our countries are not collateral victims of the imbalances linked to the choices made by the superpowers."

Macron said that the "unpredictability" of Trump's tariff approach that ended "a rule-based order for our trade" and constitutes a common threat to Europe and Asia thereby requiring their greater cohesion. "We don't want to be instructed on a daily basis what is allowed, what is not allowed, and how our life will change because of the decision of a single person."

The two were speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a global security conference hosted by the International Institute for Security Studies.

US President Donald Trump meanwhile threatened to escalate the trade war with China.

"The bad news is that China, perhaps not surprisingly to some, HAS TOTALLY VIOLATED ITS AGREEMENT," Trump said on social media. "So much for being Mr NICE GUY!"

Hours later, Trump in the Oval Office said that he will speak with Chinese President Xi Jinping and "hopefully we'll work that out". *—PTI*

Israel had agreed to a US ceasefire proposal but Hamas initially said the proposal won't stop the atrocities in the region **PHOTO: PTI**

Hamas still reviewing US' ceasefire proposal

DEIR AL-BALAH, 31 MAY

- The plan also stipulates the uninterrupted entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, which is facing a severe blockade.

Hamas announced on Friday that it is still evaluating a US proposal for a temporary ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where fresh Israeli airstrikes have reportedly killed 27 people.

Hospital officials reported a deadly strike on a tent in Khan Younis, claiming 13 lives, including eight children.

The ceasefire plan, already approved by Israeli officials, has drawn a lukewarm response from Hamas. Although the specifics of the proposal have not been publicly disclosed, a Hamas official indicated it includes a 60-day pause in fighting, provisions for serious negotiations toward a long-term truce, and guarantees against renewed Israeli hostilities following the release of hostages.

In exchange, Hamas would release 10 living hostages alongside the remains of others, in return for over 1,100 Palestinian prisoners.

The plan also stipulates the uninterrupted entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, which is facing a severe blockade.

Qatar's UN ambassador confirmed ongoing negotiations between Qatar, the US, and Egypt. However, Hamas official Bassem Naim expressed dissatisfaction, stating the proposal fails to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people, particularly in the face of a humanitarian crisis.

As the conflict escalates, Gaza's Health Ministry reports that over 54,000 residents have died since hostilities began on 7 October, 2023. *—PTI*

2 KILLED IN RUSSIAN ATTACKS ON UKRAINE

KYIV/MOSCOW 31 MAY

Russia's drone and missile attacks on Ukraine on Saturday killed at least two people, including a 9-year-old girl, officials said.

Russian troops launched some 109 drones and five missiles across Ukraine overnight and into Saturday, the Ukrainian Air Force said. Three of the missiles and 42 drones were destroyed and another 30 drones failed to reach their targets without causing damage, it said.

A 9-year-old girl was killed in a strike on a front-line village in Zaporizhzhia region, and a 16-year-old was injured. Another man was killed by Russian shelling in Ukraine's Kherson region.

Russia's Ministry of Defence said Saturday that it had gained control of the Ukrainian village of Novopil in the Donetsk region, and took the village of Vodolahy in the northern Sumy region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said some 50,000 Russian troops had amassed in the area.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has held out the prospect of restoring US-Russia trade if there's ever a peace settlement. And Russian President Vladimir Putin has said foreign companies could come back under some circumstances. "Russia wants to do large scale TRADE with the United States," Trump said after a phone call with Putin. *—PTI*

'COLOSSAL CHANGE'

Trump gives Elon Musk Oval Office sendoff

WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

US President Donald Trump bid farewell to Elon Musk in the Oval Office on Friday, providing a cordial conclusion to a tumultuous tenure for the billionaire entrepreneur.

Musk is leaving his position spearheading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and he'll be rededicating himself to running his businesses, including electric automaker Tesla, rocket company SpaceX and social media platform X.

Trump credited Musk with "a colossal change in the old ways of doing business in Washington" and said some of his staff would remain in the administration.

Musk, who wore all black, including a T-shirt that said "The Dogefather", nodded along as Trump listed contracts that had been cut under his watch. Musk had a bruise next to his right eye in the Oval Office, which he claimed was from "horsing around" with his young son.

"I think the DOGE team is doing an incredible job. They're going to continue to be doing an incredible job," Musk said after accepting a ceremonial key from Trump.

He left a searing mark on the federal bureaucracy, firing or pushing out thousands of employees. Some government functions were eviscerated, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which provided a lifeline for impoverished people around the world.

However, Musk notably fell far short of his goals. After promising to cut USD 1 trillion or even USD 2 trillion in federal spending, he lowered expectations to only USD 150 billion in the current fiscal year.

Trump suggested that Musk is "really not leaving" and "he's going to be back and forth" to keep tabs on what's happening in the administration. *—PTI*

President Donald Trump presents a key to Elon Musk in the Oval Office on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump to double tariffs on foreign steel to 50 pc

WEST MIFFLIN, 31 MAY

US President Donald Trump on Friday told Pennsylvania steelworkers he's doubling the tariff on steel imports to 50 per cent to protect their industry, a dramatic increase that could further push up prices for a metal used to make housing, autos and other goods.

In a post later on his Truth Social platform, he added that aluminium tariffs would also be doubled to 50 per cent, and both tariff hikes would go into effect Wednesday.

Trump spoke at US Steel's Mon Valley Works–Irvin plant in suburban Pittsburgh, where he also discussed a details-to-come deal under which Japan's Nippon Steel will invest in the iconic American steelmaker.

Although Trump initially vowed to block the Japanese steelmaker's bid to buy Pittsburgh-based US Steel, he reversed course and announced an agreement last week for what he described as "partial ownership" by Nippon.

"We're here today to celebrate a blockbuster agreement that will ensure this storied American company stays an American company," Trump said as he opened an event. *—PTI*

GOVT TO VET HARVARD VISA APPLICANTS' SOCIAL MEDIA

Federal officials are set to start reviewing the social media accounts of visa applicants who plan to attend, work at or visit Harvard University for any signs of antisemitism, marking the latest development in a clash between the Trump administration and the Ivy League school. A cable sent Friday signed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the vetting measure will help consular officers identify applicants with a history of those offenses "and to duly consider their visa eligibility under US immigration law." *—PTI*

FLOOD SWALLOWS NIGERIA

Flash floods in Nigeria submerged a whole town. As of time of reporting, 151 were confirmed dead, 11 people injured and more than 3,000 people displaced **PHOTO: PTI**

AMID LACK OF FUNDING

Over 60 UN offices to cut 20% of staffs

UNITED NATIONS, 31 MAY

More than 60 United Nations offices, agencies and operations have been ordered to submit proposals by mid-June to cut 20 per cent of their staff, as part of a major reform effort to consolidate operations in the face of a critical funding crunch.

The cuts affect about 14,000 posts covered by the regular budget, or about 2,800 posts, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Friday.

These include staff in the UN's political and humanitarian offices, and its agencies helping refugees, promoting gender equality and dealing with international trade, the environment and cities. The UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, is also on the list.

The cuts affect about 14,000 posts covered by the regular budget, or about 2,800 posts **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

UN Controller Chandramouli Ramanathan said in a memo to the affected agencies that the staff cuts are part of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' goal of achieving a reduction of between 15 per cent and 20 per cent in the UN's current budget of $3.72 billion.

The cuts are part of the UN80 reform initiative launched by Guterres in March as the world body approaches its 80th anniversary later this year.

The UN chief has dismissed any relationship with the cuts to foreign aid and other programs by US President Donald Trump.

Instead, he has pointed to shrinking UN resources over at least the past seven years as not all member states pay their yearly dues and many don't pay on time.

The US, with the world's biggest economy, is expected to pay 22 per cent of the regular budget, while China, recently had its share raised to 20 per cent. *—PTI*

Thousands rally in Serbia for snap elections

BELGRADE, 31 MAY

- After months of sustained protests, students argue that the current administration is incapable of delivering justice for those affected by the tragedy.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Belgrade on Friday, calling for early elections amid ongoing anti-corruption demonstrations that have challenged President Aleksandar Vucic's populist leadership.

Organised by university students, who have become pivotal in the nationwide unrest, the protests were ignited by the tragic collapse of a concrete train station canopy on 1 November, which resulted in 16 fatalities. Many Serbians link the disaster to alleged government corruption in infrastructure projects involving Chinese state companies.

The student-led movement is demanding accountability for the victims and advocating for the rule of law in Serbia, a nation officially pursuing European Union membership despite accusations against the government of undermining democratic freedoms. After months of sustained protests, students argue that current administration is incapable of delivering justice for those affected by the tragedy.

While presidential and parliamentary elections are not scheduled until 2027, President Vucic, who has initially dismissed possibility of early elections, hinted on Friday that it may occur sometime soon. Students are planning further demonstrations across country this weekend. *—PTI*

First round of India-Chile CEPA talks ends in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India and Chile commenced negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) following the signing of the Terms of Reference on 8 May, 2025. The first round began on 26 May, in New Delhi, inaugurated by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal alongside Chilean Ambassador Juan Angulo. CEPA aims to deepen economic ties and strengthen global value chains. Discussions covered 17 thematic areas, including trade in goods and services, investment, and strategic minerals. The Indian delegation was led by Joint Secretary Vimal Anand, while Chile's team was headed by Pablo Urria. The initiative was endorsed during Chilean President Gabriel Boric's April visit to India. *—ANI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

IndiGo starts Adampur-Mumbai direct flights

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Domestic airline IndiGo on Saturday announced its direct flight services to Adampur in Punjab from Mumbai, starting 2 July. Adampur will be the airline's 92nd domestic and 133rd overall destination, IndiGo said. This new direct connection will provide Punjab's agricultural and industrial sectors easier access to the major ports in the Mumbai metropolitan region, boosting trade opportunities, it added.The airline also said the new route has been strategically introduced to cater to the needs of business and leisure customers, providing them with convenient travel options. "As Adampur becomes our 55th domestic and 77th overall destination from Mumbai, the new route will boost connectivity and economic opportunities." said Vinay Malhotra, head of global sales at IndiGo. *—PTI*

KhiladiPro raises $1M in funding led by Shastra VC

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

AI-powered sports tech platform KhiladiPro (KPro) has raised about USD 1 million (about Rs 8.5 crore) in a funding round led by Shastra VC. Funds will fuel the development of proprietary AI models, boost domestic market presence, and strengthen support for young athletes nationwide, a company statement said. The funding round also saw participation from family offices and angel investors, including M Pallonji, Jeena and Co, Ayaz Billawala, Nimesh Kampani and former Kotak Bank CFO Jaimin Bhat. Bengaluru-based KPro enables mobile-based, standardised sports assessments that deliver expert-level feedback to young athletes across schools and academies.*—PTI*

IFB Agro to acquire Cargill India's aqua feed biz

KOLKATA, 31 MAY

IFB Agro Industries Ltd has announced plans to acquire Cargill India's entire commercial shrimp and freshwater fish feed business in a strategic move to strengthen its aqua feed operations. The acquisition, on a slump sale basis, includes manufacturing facilities in Vijayawada and Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, as well as feed formulations, assets, contracts, liabilities, licences, employees, and related resources. The deal is subject to a definitive Business Transfer Agreement and is expected to conclude by 31 July 2025. IFB Agro will pay the consideration in cash, with the final amount to be disclosed in the agreement. Cargill India, active since 1996, is a key player in animal nutrition, grain, oilseed, and food ingredients in the Indian market. *—PTI*

US doubling tariffs on metals will impact Indian exporters

GTRI says the consequences will be direct for India

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

US President Donald Trump's announcement to double tariffs on imported steel and aluminium will impact Indian exporters, as it would hurt their profitability, think tank GTRI said on Saturday.

On 30 May, Trump announced that he would double the existing 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from 4 June.

This hike comes under Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962, a law that allows the President to impose tariffs or other trade restrictions if imports are deemed a threat to national security.

Trump originally invoked this provision in 2018 to set the 25 per cent tariff on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium. He raised tariffs on aluminium to 25 per cent in February 2025.

US President Donald Trump originally invoked this provision in 2018 to set the 25% tariff on steel and 10% on aluminium *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

For India, the consequences are direct, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

In 2024-25, India exported USD 4.56 billion worth of iron, steel, and aluminium products to the US, with key categories, including USD 587.5 million in iron and steel, USD 3.1 billion in articles of iron or steel, and USD 860 million in aluminium and related articles.

"These exports are now exposed to sharply higher US tariffs, threatening the profitability of Indian producers and exporters," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said.

India has already issued a formal notice at the World Trade Organization (WTO) signalling its intention to impose retaliatory tariffs on US goods in response to the earlier steel tariffs.

"With Trump now doubling the tariffs, it remains to be seen whether India will carry out the retaliation by increasing tariffs on certain US exports within a month," he said. *– PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Import duty on crude edible oil cut by 10%: Govt

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

- India relies on imports for over 50% of its edible oil requirements, having brought in 15.96 million tonnes during 2023-24 oil marketing year, amounting to Rs 1.32 lakh crore.

The Indian government has reduced the basic customs duty on crude palm oil, crude soyabean oil, and crude sunflower oil from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, in an effort to decrease retail prices of cooking oils and support domestic processors.

India relies on imports for over 50 per cent of its edible oil requirements, having brought in 15.96 million tonnes during the 2023-24 oil marketing year, amounting to a value of Rs 1.32 lakh crore. The finance ministry issued a notification on the duty reduction on Friday, which takes immediate effect.

Sanjeev Chopra, Union Food Secretary, confirmed the new duty rates, while BV Mehta, executive director of the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA), noted that the effective import duty for these three oils will now stand at 16.5 per cent, compared to 27.5 per cent previously. The basic customs duty on refined oils remains unchanged at 32.5 per cent, with an effective duty of 35.75 per cent.

Industry bodies, including SEA and the Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA), welcomed the move as a necessary step to increase the duty differential between crude and refined oils. SEA president Sanjeev Asthana described the decision to boost the duty differential to 19.25 per cent as "bold and timely," aiming to divert demand back to crude palm oil and rejuvenate the domestic refining sector.

This duty reduction is expected to lower domestic prices, benefiting consumers while simultaneously supporting local oil refiners. *– PTI*

HIGHEST RECORD

Foreign portfolio investments surge to Rs 19,860 cr in May

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Foreign investment in Indian markets has reached unprecedented levels in May, according to data from the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL). The net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) inflows for the month totalled Rs 19,860 crore, making May the strongest month for foreign investment this year.

During the week from 26 to 30 May, foreign investors maintained their buying momentum, with a net inflow of Rs 6,024.77 crore recorded. All trading days during this period, with the exception of Friday, saw positive inflows, although the last trading day experienced a net outflow of Rs -1,758.23 crore.

Despite this remarkable monthly performance, overall FPI investment in 2025 remains negative, with net outflows from January to May amounting to Rs -92,491 crore. However, the significant inflows observed in May are seen as a possible indication of a shift in foreign investor sentiment.

During the week, foreign investors maintained their buying momentum, with a net inflow of Rs 6,024.77 crore recorded *PHOTO:PTI*

This recent upswing in FPI activity has been attributed to a weakening US dollar and an improving outlook for the Indian stock market. Strong economic fundamentals continue to appeal to global investors, despite FPI movements being sensitive to global dynamics and external challenges.

The year commenced with caution, but the positive trend noted in May could signify a potential reversal, contingent upon stable global conditions. Previous months reflected a more negative stance, with FPIs having divested Rs 3,973 crore in March and large sell-offs of Rs 78,027 crore and Rs 34,574 crore in January and February, respectively.

On the last trading day of May, the Indian stock market closed slightly lower amid mixed global cues, with the Sensex down 182 points at 81,451.01 and Nifty 50 falling 83 points to settle at 24,750.70. *– PTI*

IRB to transfer ₹8,450 crore assets to InvIT

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

IRB Infrastructure Trust, India's pioneering listed Infrastructure Investment Trust, has announced the transfer of three highway assets to the IRB InvIT Fund, which holds an enterprise value of approximately Rs 8,450 crore. A share purchase agreement was executed on Friday between the subsidiaries of IRB Infrastructure and Developers.

The IRB board approved the proposal to transfer the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) assets – the IRB Hapur Moradabad Tollway, Kaithal Tollway, and Kishangarh Gulabpura Tollway – which collectively comprise 1,800 lane kilometres. The transaction is expected to conclude by Q2 of FY26.

Virendra D Mhaiskar, Chairman and Managing Director, remarked that this transaction represents a significant milestone, optimising growth potential for both entities. He indicated this would allow the company to fund new opportunities nearly double the size of assets being transferred and enhance IRB InvIT Fund's portfolio with high-revenue assets. *– PTI*

IndianOil finalises largest green hydrogen project

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

In a major step towards promoting clean energy in India, IndianOil has finalised the Levelized Cost of Hydrogen (LCOH) for setting up a 10,000 Tonnes Per Annum Green Hydrogen Generation Unit at its Panipat Refinery & Petrochemical Complex.

This project marks IndianOil's entry into green hydrogen sector and will be largest green hydrogen initiative in India to date. It is to be commissioned by December 2027.

This transition is expected to significantly cut down carbon emissions, helping IndianOil move towards a more sustainable and environment-friendly model.

The plant aims to bolster India's green energy mission, contributing to a sustainable and carbon-neutral future. *– ANI*

CBIC CLARIFIES NO DELAY OR CORRUPTION IN GST REGISTRATIONS

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has refuted claims circulating on social media about delays and corruption in GST registration. A LinkedIn user alleged that their GST registration had not been granted even after 20 days.

However, CBIC clarified that the application was only filed on 26 May 2025 and is being processed by the Delhi State GST authorities. The delay was due to missing information — specifically, the designation of the person who signed the company's rent agreement. The taxpayer was informed and the application remains pending their response. CBIC urged people not to spread false information without verifying facts. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman supported the board's statement, highlighting the importance of transparency and integrity in serving taxpayers. *– PTI*

Bond market shows resilience amid easing inflation: Jefferies

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Indian bond market is exhibiting signs of strength attributed to decreasing inflation rates and anticipated interest rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), according to a report by Jefferies.

The report highlights that this environment presents an attractive opportunity for long-term investors in domestic bonds, especially in a shifting global landscape. Consumer price inflation in India has been consistently declining, averaging 4.6 per cent over the last fiscal year. In April 2025, it dropped to just 3.2 per cent, marking the lowest level since July 2019.

This decline in inflation provides the RBI with greater leeway to reduce interest rates.

The central bank has already implemented a 50 basis-point cut and is expected to lower rates an additional 75 basis points by the end of 2025. This cycle of rate cuts enhances the attractiveness of Indian government bonds compared to developed markets like US.

Notably, India's 10-year rupee-denominated government bonds have outperformed the US 10-year Treasury bonds by 51 per cent in US dollar terms since April 2020. Jefferies commented that it is increasingly plausible for Indian government bond yields to trade below those of the US Treasuries.

- Jefferies commented that it is increasingly plausible for Indian government bond yields to trade below those of the US Treasuries.

With the strength of the Indian rupee and positive sentiment towards local currency emerging market bonds, India continues to be an appealing destination for global investors seeking alternatives to fluctuating G7 bonds, offering high yields and a stable macroeconomic outlook. *– PTI*

EFC (I) Q4 net profit up by 10% to Rs 30.81 cr

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Coworking space provider EFC (I) Ltd has posted a 10 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 30.81 crore for the quarter ended March.

Its net profit stood at Rs 27.94 crore in the year-ago period.

The total income more than doubled to Rs 216.39 crore in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal from Rs 99.11 crore a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. During the 2024-25 fiscal, the company's net profit jumped nearly two-fold to Rs 112.82 crore from Rs 57.98 crore in the preceding fiscal.

Its total income increased to Rs 674.26 crore last fiscal from Rs 428.77 crore in 2023-24.

During the last fiscal, Sahay said the company closed the strategic acquisition of Bigbox Ventures, in Pune. *– PTI*

DECLINED BY RS 15.6K CR

Banks' credit growth slowed to 9.8% in May: SBI Report

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The credit growth of banks slowed to 9.8 per cent in May 2025 as compared to a strong growth of 19.5 per cent recorded in the same period last year, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI).

During April-May this year, bank credit actually declined by Rs 15,676 crore, showing a negative year-to-date (YTD) growth of 0.1 per cent. In contrast, during the same period last year, bank credit had grown by Rs 1.68 lakh crore, or 1.0 per cent YTD.

On the other hand, deposit growth remained positive but was also slower than the previous year. Deposits grew by Rs 3.06 lakh crore during April-May this year, compared to Rs 3.39 lakh crore last year.

The report pointed out that sector-wise credit for April 2025 showed a slowdown in all sectors. Credit to agriculture and allied activities grew by 9.2 per cent, sharply lower than 19.8 per cent a year ago.

Deposits grew by Rs 3.06 lakh crore during April-May this year, compared to Rs 3.39 lakh crore previous year *PHOTO:ANI*

Credit to the industrial sector rose by 6.6 per cent, slightly down from 7.4 per cent last year.

However, within the industry segment, there was an increase in credit to sectors like basic metal and metal products, engineering, vehicles and transport equipment, textiles, and construction. On the other hand, credit growth in the infrastructure sector slowed down.

In the services sector, credit growth dropped significantly to 10.5 per cent from 22.0 per cent last year. Still, credit to segments such as trade and computer software remained strong. *—ANI*

- During April-May this year, bank credit actually declined by Rs 15,676 crore, showing a negative year-to-date (YTD) growth of 0.1%. In contrast, during the same period last year, bank credit had grown by Rs 1.68 lakh crore, or 1.0% YTD.

Strong economic growth in FY25 Q4: SBI Report

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's economy recorded strong growth in Q4 of FY25, mainly due to a sharp rise in net indirect taxes, stated a report by the State Bank of India. The report stated that India's GDP grew by 7.4 per cent in Q4 FY25. This growth came as a pleasant surprise and was higher than expected, supported by 12.7 per cent increase in net indirect taxes. The jump in tax collections significantly contributed to overall expansion in economic activity during the quarter. SBI has also projected a positive outlook for Indian economy in current financial year. It expects the country to remain fastest-growing major economy in FY26, with GDP growth estimated to be in range of 6.3 per cent to 6.5 per cent. *—PTI*

PBKS face stern test against MI

Iyer's team is now in a do-or-die situation for the maiden IPL trophy

AHMEDABAD, 31 MAY

A rampant Mumbai Indians will present a stern test of character for a rattled Punjab Kings in a virtual semifinal when the two teams face off in Qualifier 2 of the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

An eight-wicket hammering at the hands of Royal Challengers Bengaluru in a one-sided Qualifier 1 may have eroded some amount of confidence in Shreyas Iyer's Punjab Kings, who are now in a do-or-die situation as they dream of winning a maiden IPL trophy.

On the other hand, Mumbai Indians took another stride towards a potential sixth title with a comprehensive victory, which knocked out title favourites Gujarat Titans in the Eliminator.

History tells Mumbai Indians know their way around these lanes of IPL knockouts better than either of the other two teams left in the competition, and that certainly tilts the scales in favour of Hardik Pandya's side.

But coach Mahela Jayawardene's challenge would be to keep his troops organised, which the former Sri Lankan captain has been able to do exceedingly well after taking over a side that finished at the bottom in the previous season.

For the Iyer-Ricky Ponting pair, the task would be to ensure their players put behind the crushing defeat in their last game and channel their energies to fight the fires that have erupted, particularly in the bowling line-up, where Arshdeep Singh is carrying extra pressure.

The absence of Marco Jansen and the unavailability of IPL's highest-ever wicket-taker in Yuzvendra Chahal were evident when PBKS scrambled to find options to apply pressure on a spicy wicket in Mullanpur against RCB. —*PTI*

Mumbai Indians will take on Punjab Kings in a virtual semifinal when the two teams face off in Qualifier 2 of the Indian Premier League here on Sunday. *PHOTO: PTI*

MI VS PBKS

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	32
MI Won:	17
PBKS Won:	15

MI vs PBKS Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

WINNING CULTURE BUILT OVER YEARS: MAHELA

MULLANPUR, 31 MAY

The winning culture that Mumbai Indians have built over the years with their core group of players does help them perform in high-pressure situations, said head coach Mahela Jayawardene after their tight win over Gujarat Titans in the IPL Eliminator here.

Having won five titles, the storied franchise is one step away from reaching another IPL final.

With Sai Sudharsan looking unstoppable in the middle, Titans were on course to chase down 229 in the knockout game on Friday, but individual brilliance from the likes of Jasprit Bumrah enabled Mumbai Indians to get over the line.

Like they usually do, the Mumbai Indians were slow starters this season before lifting their game in the second half of the tournament.

Jaywardene gave his thoughts on what makes them tick on the big stage.

"Well, when you have a winning culture, it is easier to try and have that same thing going through. Even when you get a new group, we still have a very experienced co-group within our ranks.

"So, the conversations that we have, planning and everything is about, how can we get better, how can we push through," he said referring to the core including Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav.—*PTI*

Patel wins three gold medals at IBBF World C'ship

AHMEDABAD, 31 MAY

Lalit Patel, a 56-year-old powerlifter from Gujarat, won three gold medals at the IBBF World Powerlifting Championship held in Pattaya, Thailand.

Competing in the Master Two category (83-93kg), Patel topped the podium in the bench press, deadlift, and squat events in the competition held between May 10 and 12.

Patel has been training intensively for the past eight months to prepare for the global event. He took up powerlifting just five years ago and follows a strict vegetarian diet.

"Age and diet are no barriers to success," said Patel.

Over the years, Patel has bagged 16 district-level, 18 state-level, and 12 national-level medals. With this international feat, he now plans to guide young athletes and explore competitive bodybuilding. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Steady Amandeep wins first title of the season

MYSURU, 31 MAY

Amandeep Drall, one of the most successful players on the domestic circuit, carded a third straight round of one-over 71 to win the seventh leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, breaking almost a 15-month wait for a title here on Saturday.Amandeep, whose last win came in March 2024, has now won at least once each year since 2015 and that makes her one of the most consistent players on the Hero Tour.She is the fourth different player to win his season after Vani Kapoor (3 times), Sneha Singh (2), and Rhea Purvi Saravanan. Amandeep totaled three-over 213 and won by two shots over Ridhima Dilawari, who despite a one-under 69 fell short at the Jayachamaraja Wadiyar Golf Club.—*PTI*

Bhatia rises to 3rd at the Memorial, Scheffler is 4th

DUBLIN, 31 MAY

Indian-American golfer Akshay Bhatia carded a 3-under 69 in the second round to climb to third place at the Memorial Tournament, putting himself in strong contention at the halfway stage. Bhatia, who is looking for a PGA Tour win for the third year running and was T-7 after the first round, is now 5-under. Bhatia has had five Top-10 finishes between November and March, but hasn't been able to finish that close since his third place at the Players. The World No. 31 had five birdies against two bogeys, which came in the middle of the round on the ninth and the 11th. Two of his birdies came with putts of 28 feet on the third and a 22-footer on the 12th. —*PTI*

PHOTO: TWITTER

My focus is on 2026 Asian Games: Harmeet Desai

AHMEDABAD, 31 MAY

Two-time CWG champion Harmeet Desai is focused on a podium finish at next year's Asian Games in Japan and will use the sixth season of Ultimate Table Tennis, which will feature many accomplished players, to kick-start his preparations for the continental event. Desai, currently ranked 66th in the world, bagged gold medals in the men's team event at the 2018 Gold Coast and 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. He also has a bronze medal in men's doubles at the Gold Coast and a bronze at the men's team event in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.—*PTI*

Jay Shah meets UEFA president Ceferin in Munich

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Continuing cricket's global outreach, ICC chairman Jay Shah met UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin in Munich ahead of Saturday's Champions League final between Inter Milan and Paris Saint-Germain, which will be played at the Allianz Arena. Shah, the former BCCI secretary, met Ceferin on Friday. "Honoured to represent cricket in Munich ahead of the @championsleague Final and have discussions with UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin. It's always valuable to spend time with other sporting leaders as the @ICC expands our sport's global reach," Shah posted on X on Saturday.—*PTI*

French Open 2025: Sinner marches into fourth round

PARIS, 31 MAY

Top seed Jannik Sinner dismissed world number 34 Jiri Lehecka in straight sets on Saturday at Roland Garros as the Italian booked his place in the fourth round. Sinner delivered a dominant display of power-hitting as the first-ranked men's player beat his opponent 6-0, 6-1, 6-2.

The 23-year-old will next meet 17th seed Andrey Rublev in the last 16 after the Russian was given a bye through the third round following Frenchman Arthur Fils' withdrawal due to injury.

Sinner is yet to drop a set in the French Open this year as he continues his impressive return to action following a three-month doping suspension.

He returned in time for the Italian Open earlier in May, eventually losing the final to Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets, after confidently navigating his way through the first five matches.

And on Saturday, he won the first 11 games in a row against Lehecka before the Czech got on the scoreboard to make it 5-1 in the second set.

Draper outclasses rising star Fonseca

Britain's Jack Draper underlined his status as one of the world's leading players with a ruthlessly efficient win over Brazilian rising star Joao Fonseca in the French Open third round. Fifth seed Draper was a cut above his 18-year-old opponent in a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 victory. Fonseca only broke into the world's top 100 earlier this year, but has created a buzz with his explosive style and ferocious forehand.

Pegula into last 16

American Jessica Pegula, the No. 3 seed, beat Marketa Vondrousova 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 to advance to the last 16 of Roland-Garros.

She retains her unbeaten record at Roland-Garros against unseeded opponents.

Pegula, ranked No. 3, will play the winner of the match between wildcard Elsa Jacquemot and wildcard Lois Boisson next. The American won against Romanian Anca Todoni (6-2, 6-4) and Ann Li (6-3, 7-6 (3)) in the previous rounds. —*PTI*

KHELIF MUST UNDERGO GENETIC SEX SCREENING: WB

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

World Boxing announced mandatory sex testing for all athletes on Friday. The governing body specifically mentioned Khelif when announcing the policy, saying the Algerian gold medal winner must be screened before she will be approved to fight at any upcoming events, including the Eindhoven Box Cup next month in the Netherlands.

"The introduction of mandatory testing will be part of a new policy on 'Sex, Age and Weight' to ensure the safety of all participants and deliver a competitive level playing field for men and women," World Boxing wrote in a statement. The fighters' national federations will be responsible for administering the tests and providing the results to World Boxing.

The IOC ran the past two Olympic boxing tournaments after the banishment of the IBA for decades of misdeeds and controversy, and it applied the sex eligibility rules used in previous Olympics. Khelif and Lin were eligible to compete under those standards. —*PTI*

PSG and Milan face off in Champions League final

MUNICH, 31 MAY

Paris Saint-Germain and Inter Milan go head-to-head in the Champions League final in Munich on Saturday.

European club soccer's biggest prize is at stake between two teams that have felt the pain of falling at the last hurdle in recent years.

Inter was a losing finalist against Manchester City in 2023, and PSG lost in its only final against Bayern Munich in 2020.

After spending billions of dollars and signing some of the sport's greatest players like Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi, PSG is still waiting to win its first Champions League title. Those superstars have now departed, but coach Luis Enrique has assembled one of the most exciting squads in Europe, with the likes of Ousmane Dembele, Desire Doue and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia filling the void left by that trio.

Enrique is aiming to win the competition for the second time as a coach, having lifted it with Barcelona in 2015, and would become the seventh coach to win the trophy with different teams.

"The motivation for me is to win the Champions League title for the first time for PSG," he said. "That is the gift I want to give the people, the club, the city." Inter was looking for a treble just over a month ago, but is now left with the Champions League as its only possible trophy. It lost the Italian title by a point and was knocked out of the Italian Cup in the semifinals. —*PTI*

The two sides have never met before in official competition, but they have faced off in friendlies on six occasions, with a record of three wins, two draws, and one defeat for the capital club. Paris and Inter met for the first time at the Mundialito de Clubs in Milan (0-0, 21/06/1987), then in Marrakesh (1-0, 30/12/2014), in Doha during the Qatar Winter Tour (1-0, 30/12/2015), in Eugene in the United States as part of the International Champions Cup (3-1, 24/06/2016), in Macau in China (1-1, 5-6 on pens., 27/07/2019), and in Tokyo, Japan (1-2, 01/08/2023).

PHF will seek relocation of upcoming AC

KARACHI, 31 MAY

The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has said it will seek the relocation of the upcoming Asia Cup from India if visas are not guaranteed for its national team.

The continental tournament is scheduled to be held in India between late August and early September, with the winner earning a direct qualification spot for next year's World Cup in Europe. A PHF spokesperson said the federation would consider sending its team to the tournament only if the Asian Hockey Federation and local organisers provided written assurance of visa issuance. —*PTI*

ASIAN ATHLETICS C'SHIPS

Parul Chaudhary, Sachin shine with silver

GUMI, 31 MAY

Parul Chaudhary clinched her second silver and javelin thrower Sachin Yadav also finished second while sprinter Animesh Kujur shattered the national record en route a bronze show as India's medal rush continued on the final day of the 26th Asian Athletics Championships here on Saturday.

Vithya Ramraj and Pooja also won bronze medals in their respective events.Chaudhary, who had earlier bagged silver in the 3000m steeplechase, clocked 15:15.33s to finish second in the women's 5000m.In the men's javelin throw event, rising star Yadav produced a personal best performance as he sent his spear to 85.16m to finish behind reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem, who fetched the gold with a best effort of 86.40. Hailing from a farmer's family at Khekra village near Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh, the 25-year-old had a previous personal best of 84.39m.

Parul Chaudhary and Sachin Yadav *PHOTO: X / @PARUL___CHAUDHARY*

Fellow Indian Yashvir Singh also impressed with a personal best of 82.57m for a fifth-place finish.

India's first medal of the day came through Kujur, who claimed a rare medal in the men's 200m.

He produced a standout performance, setting a new national record of 20.32 seconds.

The 21-year-old bettered his previous mark of 20.40s, set earlier this year at the National Federation Senior Athletics Competition.Japan's Towa Uzawa won gold with a time of 20.12s, while Saudi Arabia's Abdulaziz Abdu I Atafi took silver in 20.31s. Asian Games medallist Vithya sailed smoothly over the 400m hurdles to finish on the third step of the podium. —*PTI*

Hamilton determined to make Ferrari adventure work

PARIS, 31 MAY

Lewis Hamilton was disappointed, but determined on Friday evening after a difficult day of practice at the Spanish Grand Prix, during which former teammate Nico Rosberg suggested his age may be catching up with the seven-time world champion. Hamilton, who joined Ferrari this year, wound up 11th after second free practice and described his car as "not drivable", a description moderated by team boss Fred Vasseur, who admitted "the comments on the radio were a bit extreme". As the 40-year-old Briton battled to drive his capricious car around the Circuit de Catalunya, Rosberg, who beat him to win the world title in 2016, told SkyF1 that age was likely to be a factor in his struggles this year.

"Even if he's the greatest of all time, at some point you are going to get a little bit slower, and that's age-related," said Rosberg. "And when you are 40, it's going to happen sooner rather than later." —*PTI*